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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS

May 30th, 1945

DEAR MEMBER,

Without the assurances of help which have come to me from many quarters, I should not have had the courage to take over the editorship of the News-Letter. I know from past experience that this help will be generous and unstinting. I accept the responsibility in the confidence that our members will, as they did in its first days, regard the News-Letter as a joint undertaking and give me freely their criticism, comment and suggestion.

Dr. Oldham brought to the editing of the News-Letter a life time's experience of the Churches throughout the world. He had reflected deeply on the condition of the modern world and its challenge to the Christian faith. His reading was tremendous and many of the profoundest Christian thinkers were his personal friends. He made the News-Letter what William Temple described as "the focus of a vast amount of thinking." He is laying down this task in order to devote himself to another in which he is needed, that of directing the growing work of the Christian Frontier Council. This is in no sense a farewell, for the work of the News-Letter and Frontier are interdependent, each drawing upon the other. He will, I hope, write frequently in the News-Letter and I shall draw continually on his advice and help.

The News-Letter, in entering on a new stage and addressing itself to the issues which confront Christians in the post-war world, will try to preserve what has been valuable in its past and reach out to meet new needs as these become apparent. It will aim as before at expressing not so much the individual opinions of the editor as the results of corporate thinking. But a News-Letter must have a scribe, and it has been decided that a letter bearing a personal signature has certain advantages and, in particular, provides readers with a target for their criticism.

VICTORY IN EUROPE

Nobody who spent VE day among the thousands of Londoners in Trafalgar Square or Whitehall is likely to forget the experience. The universally prevailing feeling was summarized by the Lord

Mayor, in a speech which was profoundly Christian in tone, as "relief and gratitude," not only for personal deliverance, but for the preservation of the values of justice, truth and mercy from destruction. In our moments of heightened national emotion, whether of danger or of relief, it is not the party slogans but the national institutions which best express our feelings, and we flock to Buckingham Palace, Downing Street, and St. Paul's. These are symbols of our inner unity as a nation. How far they will carry us in the critical years ahead we cannot yet see. Many signs indicate that Parliament, the common law and other bulwarks of our tradition, are more valued by ordinary men and women than they were in the cynical between-war years, when the nature of tyranny was so little understood. If in this country we possess a way of life and a set of national institutions which many would like to change but few would wish to destroy, we have a possession of priceless worth, the counterpart of which has disappeared from Central Europe.

The prevailing impression which men returning from the B.L.A. bring back from Central Europe is that of an immense vacuum. Ordinary soldiers talk of the physical destruction and ruin. "We were 2½ miles away when our bombers went in," said a B.L.A. man to me, "and for hours the earth shook so that we could hardly keep our feet. Great clouds of dust came over, worse than a sandstorm. When we went in next day there was nothing left standing and we put the bulldozers over the rubble and flattened it off." The news is suddenly empty of all mention of the physical destruction of Germany's cities, but we must not forget it either in what we expect an occupying power to do, or in what we expect from Germany in repairing the ravages which she has wrought elsewhere. There is a vacuum of the mind in Germany. A British army padre wrote recently to the News-Letter of the universal desire of the Germans he had met to dissociate themselves from the Nazis. Undoubtedly they cheered and praised in 1940. Now they are overwhelmingly anxious to prove that they think nothing, believe nothing, support nothing, are nothing. They reveal no indignation, no distress, no responsibility for Nazi crimes. Their state of mind is understandable but highly dangerous. Nor is this state of mind exclusively German. Dr. Marc Boegner, President of the Federation of Protestant Churches in France, when visiting this country last month, spoke of the men returning to France from forced labour in Germany. Many of them have lost faith in their country, in any ideals or values, in human affection and family love; they do not want to return to their country nor even to their families. Nihilism is something which in this country, with its long history of passionately held and ardently pursued religious and political ideals, we can scarcely comprehend.

What is going to fill this vacuum? The occupying powers in Germany have to make dams against disease and chaos, to insure that physical life goes on in such a way as to require the services of the smallest occupying force. But what new hopes and resolves will ultimately fill these empty imaginations and re-nerve these broken wills? For the vacuum, the swept and garnished house, will be filled by something some day.

In his latest book, *The Yogi and the Commissar*,[1] Arthur Koestler, who spent some time in a notorious concentration camp for his Leftist views, asks why the forces of the Left in Europe failed to defend it against fascism. His answer is that the protagonists of the Left made the fatal mistake of thinking that men can be convinced by "logical arguments, evening classes, pamphlets, Penguins, etc.," while they forgot the all-important "90 per cent of what constitutes the real *homo sapiens*—the subconscious, the older half of the brain, the archetypes, the world of dreams." The Fascists on the other hand went all out, with the power of symbol and archetype to capture men's imaginations. The Left, says Koestler, failed to hold out to men the ideal of "a fraternity of the poor and humble of the earth." "There were not often moments in history," he continues, "which offered so much scope for the revival of traditionalist values. Under the threat of totalitarian ideologies, a threat which is by no means ended with Hitler's fall, these decaying values of the West appear in a new, nostalgically attractive light. Human rights and moral traditions, which fifty years ago we took for granted, are abolished in large parts of the world and in the process of abolition in others. *Habeas corpus*, freedom of speech, civil law, respect for the individual life, the unwritten codes of certain minimum decencies of conduct—how stale and ridiculous all these appeared at a time when utopia seemed at hand, and how desperately important they are now. The tragedy is that only those realize what oxygen means who have known the torture of suffocation . . . The English public, disgruntled but secure within the law, does not know the shivering insecurity, the naked horror of an autocratic police state. They only know their own frustrations. The predicament of western civilization is that it has ceased to be aware of the values which it is in peril of losing.

"How can these values be revived? How can the European vacuum be filled with new contents? A mere political alliance of Great Britain, France and other countries of Western Europe is not enough. It is true that those countries of the West which went through the public school of Roman colonization have a great tradition in common, and that two thousand years of judeo-christian ethics and a century of western liberalism have left in them a

[1] Jonathan Cape. 10s. 6d.

sediment which is not easily washed away by political storms on the surface. But deep and lasting though this moral substratum is, it is buried by layers of rubble. No inspiration can be derived from it until the rubble is cleared away."

The only way in which the enduring values of human existence can be restored is by individuals acting in accordance with them, both in private conduct and in public affairs. For this reason we warmly welcome the unequivocal and emphatic assertion by the Prime Minister in his broadcast that the purposes which had been defended in war must on no account be sacrificed in peace.

" On the continent of Europe we have yet to make sure that the simple and honourable purposes for which we entered the war are not brushed aside or overlooked in the months following our success, and that the words freedom, democracy and liberation are not distorted from their true meaning as we have understood them. . . . It is the victors who must search their hearts in their glowing hours and be worthy by their nobility of the immense forces that they wield."

THE SUPPLEMENT

We wrote in the last News-Letter of the attempt to create a world community as the most compelling and supremely difficult task that faces this and succeeding generations. We are fortunate in being able to publish in this issue a Supplement about the lines on which such an attempt must proceed, written by one of the leading authorities in this country on international affairs. He examines critically some of the views that have been advocated in influential quarters, and indicates the direction in which he believes the true path of progress is to be found. We specially welcome the clear and essentially Christian insistence that there are no short cuts to peace, and that a world community can be achieved only by those who learn to discipline themselves to act responsibly in their relations with others. This does not mean that there is nothing to be done until the whole world is Christian but, on the contrary, that there is something that everyone, whether in a public position or as private citizen, can do here and how. The hope of the world lies in a body of people who pursue their course unrestingly, without haste and without despairing, because they have an unwavering trust in the purpose of God.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

THE REAL AND THE IDEAL IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

My Dear Editor,

You have asked me to set down some thoughts on the controversy that has been proceeding in the Press—notably in *The Times* and *The Tablet*—on the relation between the real and the ideal in international affairs. I will do my best to comply with your request, but I should warn you in advance that I shall be a poor umpire, for I cannot give my assent to either of the two doughty contestants. Both of them, it seems to me, over-simplify the problem and so fail to penetrate to the true level of Christian thinking on international or any other public affairs.

Let us start from the position taken up in *The Tablet*. "Nothing is more depressing in this juncture of the world's history," says that journal in its issue of April 21st, "than to find the chief London newspaper pleading repeatedly and earnestly for a purely positive conception of international law and denying the very existence of a *natural law between nations* . . . The central issue before the San Francisco Conference is whether this repudiation is to triumph, or whether there is to be a return to the Christian tradition of recognizing *an objective natural justice* and making its supremacy the main purpose of any machinery of international order."

The two sets of words which I have italicized reveal the confusion in the writer's thinking. In one place he is pleading for a return to the natural law *between nations* and in the other for the recognition of *an objective natural justice*. The two conceptions are poles apart.

The idea of a natural law between nations is derived from the Stoic philosophy, and later became embodied in the mediaeval synthesis, whence it found its way, in an attenuated form, into the writings of Grotius and some of his successors. The Stoics believed that human society reproduced, in its own subordinate sphere, the order of the universe, and was subject to a law—the law of nations (*jus gentium*)—which corresponded, in the social sphere, to the laws, or uniformities, of nature. The clearest and finest expression of this conception in the English language is to be found in the concluding words of the first Book of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*:—

"Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power: both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though in different

sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."

On this theory there is a hierarchy of laws, or rather of systems of law, by which men are bound "in different sort and manner"—national law, ecclesiastical law, and the law of nations, or what since Bentham's day has been called international law, though it would be more strictly correct to say "inter-state" rather than "international."

The writer in *The Tablet* makes it clear that he considers this law of nature, as expounded by Grotius, to be the basis of the present-day system of international law, and he regrets the attempt to "re-define international law by the inductive method, limiting it to the actual usages and agreements found to prevail, and eliminating any idea of principles carrying an absolute validity."

There are, to put it broadly, two serious objections to this view. The first is that, so far from being a clear and comprehensive application of the principles of law to the present-day relations between states, international law, built up, as it has been, by "usages and agreements"—some of them between non-Christian states—is a confused patchwork, a sort of crazy quilt, in which the important and the trivial, the traditional and the up-to-date, jostle one another without any semblance of order. Large tracts of the field of international relations remain virgin soil, untouched by inter-state rules and agreements: this is particularly true of the problem of international economic relations, as anyone can find out for himself by searching for the economic section in the recognized treatises on international law.

But quite apart from the deficiencies in the existing make-up of international law, there is a much more fundamental objection to *The Tablet* writer's conception of it. It is that international law is not really law at all, in the true sense of that great word.

The reason why international law is not true law is not, as is often said, because it has no "sanction"—because the Permanent Court of International Justice has no sheriff or police force to execute its decisions. That is an altogether secondary consideration. The real reason why international law is not true law is because there is no community for it to function in.

LAW AS A SOCIAL RULE

A community is a body of people held together by a common consciousness, a sense of togetherness. This is a sociological truism which has once more been strikingly exemplified by the manifestations in our own and other countries at the close of the European War. This "togetherness" is the basis of law: for the essence of law is that it is not a command but a *social rule*—a rule accepted, and if necessary enforced, by the people as a whole because it is

felt to correspond to their social needs. One of the surest tests of the degree of a country's civilization is its law-abidingness—how deep and how widespread is the respect for law in all sections of the community. One of the great sources of our own national strength and stability—what helped to keep us going in 1940–41—is our tradition of the *common law*—a law under which we in these islands have lived and which successive generations have helped to shape to new conditions over many centuries. We were a law-abiding people before we were a democratic people, but the relationship between the nation and its laws has been more and more closely knit in proportion as the various sections of the community—now extending to all adults—have received a share in the process by which our social rules are framed. Constitutionalism and democracy are twin pillars of civilization. A state can indeed be constitutional without being democratic, as Britain was in the eighteenth century and Germany was before 1914; but its constitutionalism rests on weak foundations unless it is rooted in the life of the people. Conversely, a state can provide itself with the formal apparatus of democracy without being, in the true sense, constitutional. Hitler and Mussolini spoke the language and flaunted the forms of democracy, and these unconstitutional perversions of popular government have not passed away with the disappearance of these particular demagogues. Indeed they are likely to be with us, both in the Old World and the New, for a long time to come: for constitutional democracy is not a *regime* that can be improvized. It takes more than a resistance movement to make a Switzerland.

THE PRESENT-DAY PROSPECT FOR WORLD LAW

Thus, when we look at the world with which the students and practitioners of international law are confronted, we find that it consists of a great variety of States—some sixty in number—which differ greatly amongst themselves in the attitude of their peoples towards their laws. Some, like Great Britain and Switzerland, have a deeply rooted constitutional tradition, and these two States, be it noted, have never been distinguished for their enthusiasm for international law. Others are under regimes by which the people have become habituated to having rules imposed on them from above, and it is this type of government which finds it easiest to give its assent to new inter-state regulations, for it does not need to assure itself that these will enjoy the support of their people. Whether agreements framed under such conditions will be carried out is another matter.

What prospect is there, under such conditions, of the coming into existence over the world as a whole of a common social consciousness, such as would form a basis for a true system of international law, or, to use the more correct term in this connection,

world law? If we are thinking of such a relationship between the nation and its laws as exists in Britain and Switzerland, our answer must be that there is no prospect at all. For a long time to come progress towards a system of world law must consist mainly in the development of respect for law amongst the peoples in whom it is at present deficient. Amongst these are the colonial peoples, whose laws, rooted in tribal custom, have been rudely interfered with by the irruption of social forces from outside. One of the great social achievements of recent years has been the attempt, through the system of indirect rule devised by the insight of Lord Lugard, to re-integrate African society by establishing a true relationship between the customary institutions which enjoyed the people's respect and the government that had been imposed upon the community as a result of the impact of external forces. From this point of view the recent change in the constitution of Nigeria is a more epoch-making event than the San Francisco Conference.

Must we then wait until we have a world of Switzerlands and Swedens before we can hope for a lasting improvement in inter-state relations? If we are thinking in terms of the symmetrical pattern which *The Tablet* writer cherishes in his breast—a sort of Platonic "idea" of world order—the answer must be "Yes." Indeed, I would go even further in my pessimism. It is not only that we shall have to wait a very long time before the Afghans and the Argentines are as constitutionally minded as the Swiss and the Swedes; it is that it is more than doubtful whether the Swiss and the Swedes themselves are capable of carrying over their law-abidingness from the social rules of Switzerland and Sweden to those of the world as a whole. Sweden and Switzerland are true communities. Will the world as a whole ever become a community in the same sense? Will the ordinary man and woman, whose sense of "togetherness" impelled them to go to Buckingham Palace on the evening of May 8th, ever feel that sense of togetherness, or anything at all clearly resembling it, with the world as a whole and its governing institutions?

To ask this is to ask what is not simply a sociological but a biological question. And the biologists' answer is a decided negative. Man, as Professor A. D. Ritchie has lately reminded us afresh, is, in his native disposition, what he was in the stone age. Up to about fifty years ago it was believed that men and animals transmitted to their offspring characteristics acquired during their life time, and on this basis Condorcet and other apostles of the Enlightenment constructed a theory of "progress" according to which the whole world would become "civilized" on western lines—indeed, on French lines—within a few generations. But the biologists have now dispelled this dream. Statesmen and political thinkers have to face the fact that man is, and will remain, a small-scale animal, and that

no scientific inventions, no improvement in transport and communications, can alter this inherited disposition. "Birds of a feather flock together" in spite of the opportunities opened out by their wings, and the same holds good of their newly-winged human brethren.

But this very fact should make us appreciate what an immense human achievement it is to have fashioned, out of such unpromising human material, large-scale working democracies such as those of the British Commonwealth and the United States. This has been done through the power of the social, as contrasted with the physical, inheritance—through the pervading influence and momentum of ideas, traditions and institutions. Do not let us ignore or belittle this achievement in the vain attempt to transform British and American citizenship into World citizenship. Let us rather count amongst our blessings the patriotism which has inspired the self-sacrifice of our fighting men and war workers—that harmony of mind and will and feeling and instinct which is evoked by the strains of the national anthem.

THE SURRENDERERS OF SOVEREIGNTY

There is a school of writers in international relations which insists that the great enemy on our path towards a better world is the "sovereign state" which, as they point out, can not only set in motion these tremendous human forces, but can also arm them with all the destructive powers placed at the disposal of governments by modern science. The remedy that these writers commend to us is that these "Leviathans" should make a surrender of these formidable powers. Such a surrender could only be made to a super-state. But a super-state, as we have already seen, could not be a constitutional state, and therefore still less a state whose rule could be relied upon to be just, and the last condition of the world under this plan would be worse than the first.

Thus there is no way out by this road. "Surrender of sovereignty" is a false scent, leading into a blind alley.

How then are we to deal with our Leviathans? The right way to deal with them is not to weaken them—at least in their external relations (Leviathan at home is a different problem)—but to turn them from cold monsters into moral entities endowed with a sense of their social responsibility in a world of other states and peoples—in other words to make the proud citizens of Britain, the United States and other "Leviathans," greater or smaller, as conscious of their duty to their neighbours outside their own borders as they are, under their own Rule of Law, of their duty to their neighbours within them.

Beware of writers on the modern state who abound in the use of the adjective "sovereign." It is a misleading term because it

is ambiguous. It may mean simply that there is no power in the world which can impose its authority on, say, the government of Great Britain or of the United States. To affirm that is to utter a truism—and what is certain to remain a truism for as long ahead as we can see. But the adjective "sovereign" also means, or rather *implies*, "self-regarding" or "anti-social"—a State which ignores the fact that it exists in a world composed of a number of other states and peoples, with whom it is in constant relations and towards whom it therefore necessarily has social duties. Because the word sovereign dates from a time—the sixteenth century—when inter-state relations were on a very limited scale, it would be much better to drop it and use the more colourless word "independent." "Independence" is capped by "interdependence," whereas there is not a parallel word to go with "sovereignty." The first duty of the citizen of a modern state, in the field of international relations, is to ensure that its government and its public opinion have a constant and lively sense of its interdependence and of the social obligations arising therefrom. This means paying as much, or almost as much, attention to external affairs as to internal affairs. There is no space to go into the practical problems here involved, but obviously, had we not grossly neglected our duty in this respect in the inter-war period the second world war would never have taken place. It was set in motion by wickedness, but it was rendered possible by ignorance and irresponsibility. These are not faults which can be cured by trying to replace present loyalties by loyalty to a phantom super-state.

A world in which the Great Powers have surrendered their independence to a single world authority is a dream and not even a beautiful dream. But a world in which the "Great Powers" have become "Great Responsibles"—that is to say have developed a sense of social obligation to the whole of mankind and have worked out policies upon this basis—is a reasonable political objective; indeed, many such policies have already been worked out, though not as deductions from "principles," in the way that would appeal to the writer in *The Tablet*.

PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE AND FREEDOM

This brings me back, at long last, to *The Times* editorialist. In so far as he is making short work of the international lawyers and the surrenderers of sovereignty, he is on easy ground; but no one can read his successive utterances without being left with a disagreeable impression of cynicism and even of levity. "It is the greatest illusion," he tells us, "to suppose that democracy is the negation of 'power-politics,'" and he proceeds to justify the place of the Great Powers in the Dumbarton Oaks scheme. But what he omits, and what his use of the ambiguous term "power politics"

obscures, is that in the world of political fact, as opposed to the world of pure theory, in which the surrenderers of sovereignty dwell, the opposite of power politics is not debating society politics, but responsibility politics. He tells us engagingly that " the notion of an institution based uniquely on right and justice, and brought into being by the act of an inspired law-giver, belongs to the realm of myth and not of history " ; but he does not leave us with any sense of the part which the great ideals of justice and freedom have played in the history of human government. What we are offered instead is " an international institution, as imperfect and rough and ready as most human institutions, but capable of maintaining international peace and security over a long period." Such a peace, which seems to have no place for justice and freedom, would not be a *Pax Britannica*, or even a *Pax Romana* ; for the Romans, as we have seen, though they undervalued freedom, had their own conception of the place of law in their imperial scheme. It would, in fact, be a mere respite for the war-weary.

I do not wish to accuse *The Times* editorialist of advocating a peace based on injustice and oppression. No doubt his desire to defend the place allotted to the Great Powers in the Dumbarton Oaks scheme carried him further than, on cool consideration, he would be prepared to go. But his writing certainly calls for a corrective ; and this brings me back to the second element in *The Tablet* writer's philosophy of international relations, his call for " a return to the Christian tradition of recognizing an objective natural justice."

RIGHT AND WRONG IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

What he means by these words, as I understand them, is that right and wrong apply in international affairs just as they do in national affairs and in private affairs—that, in every policy that has to be worked out in them, in every decision that has to be made, there is a *right* thing to do, if it can only be discovered. How can it be discovered ? *The Tablet's* method would be to refer the particular case to its appropriate " principle " and then to " deduce " the answer. That method, as we have seen, will not work in this increasingly complicated and ever-changing world. The only way in which right policies can be devised and right standards worked out in international relations to-day is for those who are concerned with them, whether as statesmen or diplomats, or civil servants or members of Parliament, or as plain citizens—to keep their consciences as sensitive on these issues as they do on issues nearer home and, at the same time, to be as scrupulous in forming their judgment on the best available information both on the general world situation and on the particular facts involved. In international affairs, just because the material is so fluid and variegated and " principles " so difficult to establish, the voice of

conscience counts for more than in the more regulated domains of our life. It was the British conscience which, contrary to all precedent, put an end to the slave trade ; it was the British conscience which refused to tolerate the German invasion of Belgium in 1914 ; it was that same conscience which rose against Hitler after his occupation of Prague in March, 1939. And to-day this conscience, which has twice within a generation called our Leviathan to arms, has the support of a whole group of other peoples, whose instinctive moral reactions and fundamental attitude to public affairs are very close to our own. Our State in these islands is not the only Leviathan which is seeking to apply the inner light in a realm which Machiavelli and his followers have too long been allowed to claim as all their own. There is a passage in the writings of J. A. Spender, one of our most discerning writers on these themes, that is worth recalling to-day. At the close of his book on European diplomacy in the half-century before 1914, with all the documents fresh in his head, he pens this judgment : " I think it may be said without cant that, among the mass of documents, the British strike their own note in their appeals to the common ideas of right and wrong, and their observance of the candour and rectitude which would be expected in the dealings of private individuals, and an Englishman may reasonably take some pride in that. But to the rest of the world this was either hypocrisy or mere unacquaintance, to be expected from the Islanders, with the technique of European diplomacy."

Perhaps the best hope for the future of international relations is to be found, not in any new machinery that may be devised to take the place of the League of Nations, but in the fact that " the rest of the world," which, for Mr. Spender with his documents, meant the other European Great Powers of the pre-1914 world, now includes the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, as well as China, with her great ethical tradition, and those smaller European states, so akin to us in their moral outlook, who had no call to assume responsibility in the international field before 1914. Here is a great moral influence capable of being mobilized on behalf of policies in which conscience and *expertise* have combined together to chart the long and difficult passage towards a juster, freer and happier world.

Yours sincerely,

A STUDENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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